

Inter-Agency Coordination on the Development of Health Assessments

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The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (U.S. EPA) National Center for Environmental Assessment (NCEA) and the ATSDR recently established a memorandum of understanding (MOU). Under this MOU, the NCEA and ATSDR have agreed to increase their coordination on the development of health assessments for hazardous chemicals found in the environment. The ATSDR is mandated under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA or Superfund), as amended by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA), to develop toxicological profiles for hazardous substances found at facilities on the CERCLA National Priorities List (NPL). The ATSDR is also required to update and republish profiles no less often than every three years. To date, 275 profiles have been published; 162 current profiles are available. The NCEA manages the IRIS, a U.S. EPA database that contains the Agency's scientific consensus positions on human health effects that may result from exposure to chemical substances in the environment. The IRIS currently provides information on health effects associated with more than 500 chemical substances. Many of these health assessments are developed by the NCEA. The NCEA also prepares peer-reviewed provisional assessments for the Superfund program when an IRIS assessment is not available. The MOU encourages scientists from the two agencies to participate more actively in the development of each other's assessments. Additionally, the MOU provides opportunities for the two agencies to share resources. For example, the NCEA and ATSDR are collaborating on some literature search and retrieval efforts to prevent redundancy. Increased coordination in the development of health assessments will enable the U.S. EPA and ATSDR to leverage federal resources and improve scientific concordance.

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